

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

May 17, 2001

LB 305

and is now a part of LB 305. I think it's a good idea but I know it is not costless. As part of his underlying amendment, it is a spending program that we would not be providing funding for. As part of the...it would be, I think, the most effective part of the amendment as concerns teachers salaries. The underlying amendment has more proposals that are not funded or not adequately funded for which, in my opinion, you're farther from the main goal of LB 305. Again, the main goal of LB 305 is to address teachers salaries in Nebraska. The impact on salaries must be significant, one that seriously begins to close the gap between salaries in Nebraska and those in surrounding states, and it must allow us to attract new teachers as well as retain veteran teachers. It must be something we can sustain and it must be something we can afford. Coming into this session, I mentioned this before, these were the teacher salary options we had, number one, do nothing. We can declare there is no problem or we can declare that it's not the state's problem or we can declare that there is a problem but that we are not going to deal with it. Option number two, do something within our means. This option shifts the focus so that it is not on teachers salaries but instead it is on not raising taxes. Option three, do something that requires a combination of state and local resources recognizing local control and the need for local commitment. Option four, do what the Teacher Salary Task Force recommended, provide state funds to schools for salary supplements to teachers. The state would pay 100 percent of these salary supplements regardless of whether the local district had the means or not. These options, I think, represent the range of choices we had. Option one, doing nothing costs nothing, at least in terms of appropriations from the General Fund. Option four, the Teacher Salary Task Force recommendation would require a General Fund appropriation of between 103 and 114 million each year. LB 305 proposes a middle path which would fit under option three. It narrowly focuses on teachers salaries in public schools. It proposes a means to provide the state...the required state funding and it proposes a means to provide the required local funding. The Governor has positioned himself firmly under option two. At first my understanding was that he would be opposed to any additional state revenue that required any tax increase. Now, if I understand, his opposition would extend to any additional local